

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Australia



No/131; Peter Walker on the Barangaroo Parklands, Teresa Moller in Conversation, Revival Exhibition, Piet Oudolf's Giardino, Taylor Brammer in Profile, Reimagining Ports in Hobart, Sydney and Cairns.

AUGUST 2011
AUS/NZ \$13.95



FALLS CREEK WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

Büro North's tree-like wayfinding signage system at Falls Creek in Victoria helps visitors navigate their way around regardless of the season.

WORDS CASSIE HANSEN PHOTOGRAPHY DANIEL COLOMBO



01 THE INFORMATION HUB SIGN.

02 THE STRIKING ORANGE COLOUR DRAWS ATTENTION IN THE SNOWY LANDSCAPE.



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THE FALLS CREEK ALPINE RESORT MIGHT BE in the mountainous ranges of north-eastern Victoria but there's a distinctly European-ski-village feel about it. As the only "ski-in, ski-out" village in Australia, the Falls Creek resort allows guests to ski right up to their chalet door, after either a long day of skiing or a short day of falling over.

Design studio Büro North, whose diverse wayfinding portfolio has garnered awards and praise over its short life, was commissioned to complete a new signage system for the resort. As part of preparation, the team spent a week on site, immersing themselves in the environment as well as interviewing different stakeholders and village users. What soon became apparent was the immense amount of challenges in store for the team in creating an efficient signage system for an Australian ski village.

The first challenge was the impulsive terrain, conditions and seasons. The system would need to be strong enough to withstand the

chill of winter and the occasional category two wind, but also the summer sun. The signage also had to be clear enough to direct village guests around the small but complex site, which in many cases meant zigzagging to climb up the mountain, going west in order to reach an eastern destination. During summer and winter, different facilities would open and close, therefore the system would have to be able to easily adapt to these seasonal operational requirements. Finally, the system had to take into account a diverse range of users. Unlike wayfinding for a retail space or hospital where users are essentially behaving the same way, the ski village consisted of a mix of local residents, non-English-speaking tourists, maintenance staff, once-off visitors and seasoned regulars. On top of that, these users were divided into skiers, snowboarders, mountain bikers and bushwalkers.

The resort's previous system was antiquated, using several poles at an intersection, which was both inefficient and confusing. >



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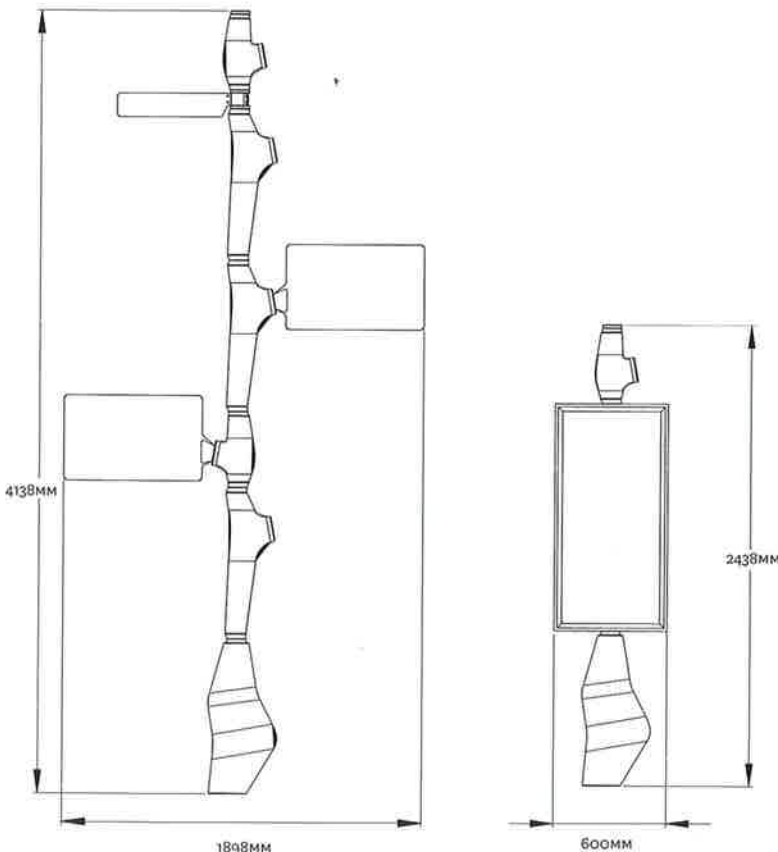
03 CASTING OF THE SIGNAGE BY SCHIAVELLO AT MULLHOLLAND FOUNDRY. PHOTOGRAPHY: SOREN LUCKINS.

Büro North's system wished to consolidate these multiple poles into one, as well as providing a lot of information at an apposite height for reading. Proving its efficiency, twenty-six new poles have been put up across the ski village, replacing more than forty in the old system.

The resultant signage poles are made up of two aluminium modules – one short and one tall. The modules are hollow, sliding over a standard street pole and locking together. A typical pole might include three tall modules and two short ones to reach a four-metre height. Rectangular signs branch out from the modules' joints, giving it a tree-like figure.

The blaze orange colour choice, while unusual and audacious, was curiously not based on its high visibility virtues, but in fact a lack of choices. Reds and yellows associated too much with danger and hazards, while blues and greens blended with the trees and the corporate branding. While the colour was a concern, when mixed with white modules and with the orange modules only appearing at eye level, the overall colour scheme draws a person's attention and is bold at the same time.

With this ski village signage system, Büro North's design process was exceptionally rational, each decision based on reason and context rather than style. While this approach runs the risk of creating something ugly, the end result is beautiful and distinct for what it is and where it is.



FALLS CREEK STREET DIRECTIONAL SIGN AND INFORMATION HUB SIGN
1:100

PROJECT
FALLS CREEK
WAYFINDING SIGNAGE
FALLS CREEK, VICTORIA

PROJECT TEAM
BÜRO NORTH AND IDLAB

DESIGN CREDITS
SOREN LUCKINS, FINN BUTLER,
DAVID WILLIAMSON, TOM
ALLNUTT, ANTE LJUBAS

MANUFACTURE
SCHIAVELLO

ENGINEER
MICHAEL BLAIR

TIME SCHEDULE
DESIGN AND DOCUMENTATION:
12 MONTHS
CONSTRUCTION: 3 MONTHS